

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

The Roanoke County Community Plan is a blueprint for the future growth and development of the County over the next 10-15 years. It provides direction and guidance, for both the public and private sectors, in making decisions about land development, public services and resource protection. This Plan allows decision makers to study the long-term consequences of current decisions and recognize that today's actions will impact the County for many years to come.

The Community Plan is a planning document and reflects the community's goals and visions of what the future might be. It allows the Board of Supervisors to present a snapshot of the County's long range goals, policies and strategies to the community. This includes those involved in private land development, neighborhood organizations and civic groups, neighboring jurisdictions, County departments, commissions and boards and the general public. It also provides those in the land development process the opportunity to anticipate Board decisions and to actively work in concert with the Plan rather than in conflict with it.

The Community Plan is a public document, developed with a great deal of public participation. It encourages individual participation in public affairs and particularly the long-range planning process of the County. It also ensures citizens that decisions based on the Plan are well-thought out and in the best interests of the County as a whole.

The Roanoke County Community Plan was developed in accordance with Chapter 15.2 of the *Code of Virginia*, Local Planning Legislation, Article 3, The Comprehensive Plan, which requires that:

*“The local (planning) commission shall prepare and recommend a comprehensive plan for the physical development of the territory within its jurisdiction.”*

*“At least once every five years the comprehensive plan shall be reviewed by the local (planning) commission to determine whether it is advisable to amend the plan.”*

The foundation of this Community Plan is the community's vision for the future documented in the *Vision Report, The Changing Century - Roanoke County 2010*. The research, debate, discussion, thought and commitment that went into the visioning process are articulated and reflected in this Plan. The following components of the Plan support the community's vision:

- Land use, community facilities and resource preservation issues - These general, community wide issues affect the entire community.
- Future Land Use Guide - This chapter includes land use designations and policies.

- Community Planning Areas - The future land use maps are included in this chapter along with critical neighborhood issues and resources.
- Community Plan Implementation - The final chapter includes work item priorities.

## THE COMMUNITY PLAN PROCESS

### History

Roanoke County has a long history of comprehensive planning. In 1939 the County established the Planning Commission. Within the next year the county's first Community Plan was adopted and in 1941 the first zoning ordinance was in place.

In 1974 Roanoke County adopted the second Community Plan and in 1983 a general revision to that plan was begun. Two years later the third Community Plan was adopted by the County. The community lead visioning process was begun in 1995 and at its conclusion, in the summer of 1996, an intensive community involvement process was begun to develop the 1998 Community Plan.

### Process

The community involvement process used in developing the Community Plan is, in many ways, as important to the credibility and value of the plan as the final document itself. The Plan must reflect the community's value and be open to all citizens of the County in order to be called a success. It cannot be a reflection of only a minority of viewpoints or special interest groups.

Over the past three years, Roanoke County has been involved in an extensive outreach program to involve its citizens in the development of a new Community Plan. The first component of this outreach program was the visioning process. In February 1995 the visioning process formally began with a community values survey. This scientifically-valid telephone survey questioned 500 county residents about public policy issues and assessed the relative importance of these issues. The visioning process continued throughout the spring and summer and eventually involved more than 800 citizens in the development of a vision of what Roanoke County could be like in the year 2010. This component of the citizen outreach program was concluded in June 1996 with the publishing of the *Vision Report, The Changing Century - Roanoke County 2010*.

The second component of the outreach program was to develop a neighborhood-based citizen participation element. This element was designed to identify issues at the neighborhood level and to relate the findings of the vision process to each neighborhood. To accomplish this task the Board of Supervisors appointed a Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) consisting of 24 citizens - two from each of the twelve community planning areas. The CAC held their first meeting in August 1996. The charge to the CAC was to formulate a citizen participation process that would effectively involve a broad spectrum of county citizens in the comprehensive planning process. In addition, the goal was to develop a citizen involvement structure that would continue to be involved in county planning at all levels - from the development of neighborhood plans to

rezoning issues. The purpose was to integrate active, concerned citizens into the planning process thereby increasing the level of commitment to the long-range plan and ensuring future accountability to the plan.

The CAC met during the fall of 1996 and by December developed a citizen participation process. This process involved the creation of neighborhood councils in each of the county's 12 community planning areas. The CAC appointed local citizens and leaders of community-based organizations to serve on the councils. The CAC's objectives for the neighborhood council process were:

*To assure that the Community Plan reflects the desires of the majority of citizens for the future of Roanoke County and to expand the sphere of influence the Community Plan will have in guiding decisions in the future for our Roanoke County community.*

The neighborhood councils began meeting in January 1997. Over the next four months they worked to identify critical land use, resource preservation and public facility issues in their neighborhoods. These extensive lists of issues were later prioritized by council members. Secondly, the councils mapped cultural, historical and natural resources that added uniqueness, beauty and a sense of place to their communities. The final component of their work was to identify examples of design elements, located in their neighborhoods, such as building size and mass, building architecture, landscaping, parking design, signage, materials and colors that are visually appealing.

In May 1997 a community forum was held to exhibit the results of the neighborhood council process. This meeting was an open house with booths that displayed the work and maps produced by each council. Representatives of various special interest groups made presentations to the Planning Commission and the CAC.

The major components of the Community Plan reflect the results of the visioning process as well as the work of the CAC and neighborhood councils. The first component provides background, goals, objectives, issues and opportunities and implementation strategies in the areas of land use, community facilities and resource preservation. The second component is the Future Land Use Guide. Land use guidelines and policies that reflect the results of the visioning process are outlined. The third component is the Community Planning Area Analysis. This section takes an in-depth look at each of the 12 community planning areas around the County. Future land use maps are displayed in this section. The final chapter of the Plan includes implementation strategies.

## **PLAN UPDATES**

Every five years the Community Plan will be reviewed and updated as necessary to ensure that it is consistent with the overall community vision. This review process will provide the opportunity to analyze and address changes in the community and to update statistical data and implementation strategies. It will also provide the opportunity to measure progress and make adjustments, where necessary, toward the implementation strategies recommended in the 1998 plan.

## **PLAN AMENDMENTS**

The Roanoke County Community Plan is a general planning document that is subject to interpretation. It is intended to guide future land use development in the County but is not fixed in place. Therefore, proposed amendments to the Community Plan will be received and reviewed twice annually in the months of January and July. Amendments to the Roanoke County Community Plan may be initiated by any citizen, the Board of Supervisors, the Planning Commission, any county landowner or the Secretary to the Planning Commission.

Amendment applications must meet one or more of the following criteria:

- The subject property was misinterpreted or overlooked in the Community Plan.
- Significant changes have occurred in the condition of surrounding lands.
- The requested amendment will significantly enhance other goals of the Community Plan.

Amendment applications will be considered, based on the preceding qualifications. The Planning Commission will review the application, hold a public hearing and recommend to the Board of Supervisors whether to consider the amendment. The Planning Commission may, at their discretion, hold a community meeting or convene a meeting of the appropriate neighborhood council. If recommended by the Planning Commission, the Board of Supervisors will hold a public hearing and vote to accept, deny, or modify the amendment and forward its order to the Secretary to the Commission. The Board of Supervisors retains the right to initiate an amendment to the Community Plan at any time. Any amendment should be determined to be consistent with the remaining goals of the Community Plan and the overall community vision.

